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SUBJECT Interview with Admiral Stansfield Turner

CHRIS WALLACE: There was more fighting over the Falklands this weekend and more diplomatic maneuvering. Back once again to help us understand the situation is Admiral Stansfield Turner, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Let's recap the situation this weekend. There were really two big incidents. First, the British strafing of two Argentine ships in the channel between the Falklands; and then that British commando raid up here, north of West Falkland Island, on Pebble Island.

The British seem to have total air and sea superiority. I mean is that the fact? That's certain what we seem to see, reading the accounts.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: With two exceptions, that the fact. They've dominated all the battles except two. On May 4th they lost the HMS Sheffield to an attack by an Argentine aircraft. What people haven't noticed too much is last week another Argentine aircraft put a bomb through a different British ship. Fortunately, from the British point of view -- unfortunately, from the Argentine -- the bomb did not explode. So it didn't do a lot of damage.

I think what this tells us, though, Chris, is that although the British can win almost all the battles, they're going to take damage. They're going to take losses if they keep trying to enforce this blockade over a long period of time.

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WALLACE: Admiral, why are the Argentines doing nothing? Is it because they can't, because they are so totally outgunned? Or are they trying, in some sense, to play possum with the British?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Everything we've seen so far is they just haven't been very competent, except for these two individual pilots. For instance, their submarines should be a real threat to the British, and we just haven't heard from them, other than the one that got caught on the surface out at South Georgia.

Now, the British have begun to change the tune, though, with what you mentioned, this raid on the island up here, Pebble Island. That, I believe, was only because they're getting ready for an invasion. The aircraft that the Argentines have put on that island were ideally suited for attacking ground forces ashore unless those ground forces had total air cover over them.

WALLACE: So by knocking those airplanes out, the British are, in some sense, helping themselves in case of an invasion.

We have some pictures that we'd like to look at, pictures that were recently taken of the fleet in the South Atlantic.

It doesn't look too bad there, but apparently the weather is quite serious: a storm approaching the Falklands, heavy seas, sometimes as high as 30 or 40 feet.

It looks a little bit rougher there.

How long can the British stay out there? I mean can they really impose a long blockade?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It would be costly in the wear and tear on their men and ships, let alone these losses that we've talked about. I think the problem is that winter is coming. It's going to get worse and worse. The weather was bad this weekend. Tomorrow, the next day are good days for an invasion if they were ready to do it.

WALLACE: If they do invade, the British would still be outnumbered about two- or three-to-one. Can they win, given those odds?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, I think they can at least establish a military presence on the islands and hold some of the territory. Whether they can push all the Argentines off or not is another problem. But they have a lot of territory to put those 10,000 troops on, and the British only have to come in in one or two places.

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WALLACE: All right. Let me ask you for this week's assessment. What do you think is going to happen by the end of the week, a peace settlement or all-out war?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think the odds are slightly more in favor of war than peace.

WALLACE: Sixty-forty?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Sixty-forty, something like that.

WALLACE: Why?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Because the bottom line that each of the political leaders has is diametriclaly opposite. The British have to demonstrate that the Argentines will not get eventual sovereignty. The Argentines, if they're going to keep their people happy, are going to have to demonstrate exactly the opposite.

WALLACE: We seem to be just where we started.

Admiral, thank you again.

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